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Lincoln County Health Officer
Brad Black, MD
512 California Ave.
Libby, MT 59923

EXHIBIT 8
DATE 2/2/07
HB 407

February 1, 2007

To Whom It May Concern:

I, Brad Black, as Lincoln County Health Officer support the request for funding to address the devastating health consequences that are associated with the community wide asbestos exposure that occurred in Libby, Montana. The EPA recognizes this asbestos exposure as one of the worst environmental health disasters in American history as never before has there been such wide spread disease and loss of life. It is truly a public health disaster that our community will be facing far into the future.

We realize the current request is not a permanent or long term solution but it's desperately needed to assist the thousands of community members who are currently facing medical hardship due to the exposure and related diseases. The WR Grace sponsored health plan has increasingly denied claims including necessary medical evaluations, hospitalizations, oxygen, and the list goes on.

Our community has come together and we continue to work towards long-term healthcare solutions on many different fronts. In the short term we request this appropriation if the local Lincoln County Health Board could distribute the funds. They understand how to best utilize the mechanisms already established in our community to address the complex needs faced by our community members.

It is critically important to fill this gap so essential care can be provided until we secure long-term healthcare and funding. In addition, local control is vitally important based on the complexity of needs and existing systems that address our community members multi-faceted needs related to the asbestos disaster. Thank you for your support.

Sincerely,

Brad Black, MD

Brad Black, MD
Lincoln County Health Officer